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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/638,457	08/14/2000	Eric Boyd	18567-0012	9536
37509	7590	05/17/2004		EXAMINER
DECHERT LLP				MYHRE, JAMES W
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PALO ALTO, CA 94303			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3622	

DATE MAILED: 05/17/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	09/638,457	BOYD ET AL.	
	Examiner James W Myhre	Art Unit 3622	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 March 2004.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-8,24-26,38-59 and 71 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-8,24-26,38-59 and 71 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on March 16, 2004 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

2. The amendment filed on March 16, 2004 under 37 CFR 1.114 and 1.116 has been considered but is ineffective to overcome the Eggleston et al (6,061,660) and Kamille (5,996,997) references. The amendment canceled Claims 27-37 and 60-70 and added new Claim 71. Claims 9-23 were previously canceled. Therefore, the currently pending claims considered in the action below are Claims 1-8, 24-26, 38-59, and 71.

Claim Objections

3. The amendment filed on March 16, 2004 has overcame the objection to Claim 46 in paragraph 3 of paper number 6. Therefore, the Examiner hereby withdraws that objection.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless -

(e) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371[©] of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

The changes made to 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 (AIPA) do not apply to the examination of this application as the application being examined was not (1) filed on or after November 29, 2000, or (2) voluntarily published under 35 U.S.C. 122(b). Therefore, this application is examined under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) prior to the amendment by the AIPA (pre-AIPA 35 U.S.C. 102(e)).

5. Claims 38-41, 43, 44, and 46-48 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Copple et al (6,178,408).

Claims 38 and 43: Copple discloses a system for earning and redeeming incentive points, comprising:

a. A network with multiple servers including at least an auction server and a store server (col 3, line 64 - col 4, line 34). It is inherent that the servers connected to the same network (e.g. the Internet in Copple) would be accessible to a user also connected to the same network; and

b. A user database of user accounts holding incentive points earned by the user (col 4, lines 8-11) which may be redeemed by submitting the winning bid in an auction of an item (col 6, lines 7-24 and 57-63).

Claims 39 and 44: Copple discloses a system for earning and redeeming incentive points as in Claims 38 and 43 above, and further discloses the user obtaining a code offline, submitting the code, and being credited with points when the code is determined to be valid (col 3, line 64 - col 4, line 26).

Claims 40 and 46: Copple discloses a system for earning and redeeming incentive points as in Claims 38 and 43 above, and further discloses that the interacting with the servers comprises registration, attention to an ad, or a purchase (col 3, line 64 - col 4, line 52).

Claims 41 and 47: Copple discloses a system for earning and redeeming incentive points as in Claims 38 and 43 above, and explicitly discloses that the points can be redeemed as payment for submitting the winning bid in an auction (col 3, line 64 - col 4, line 34).

Claim 48: Copple discloses a system for earning and redeeming incentive points as in Claim 43 above, and further discloses the network and servers are the Internet and an Internet server (col 3, line 64 – col 4, line 34).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

7. Claims 42, 45, and 49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Copple et al (6,178,408) in view of Eggleston et al (6,061,660).

Claims 42, 45, and 49: Copple discloses a system for earning and redeeming incentive points as in Claims 38 and 43 above, but does not explicitly disclose placing the user account behind a firewall and using passwords to increase the security of the account data. However, Eggleston discloses a similar system for awarding promotion points to a user's account which further discloses placing the user account behind a firewall and using passwords to increase the security of the account data. While it is not explicitly disclosed that the account data will also be encrypted, encryption is a well known security measure used to protect data and, thus, would have been an obvious addition to the security measures disclosed by Eggleston. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to encrypt the user account data in Copple. One would have been motivated to use encryption in order to prevent unauthorized disclosure of the information, especially if duplicate data was being stored on a smart card carried by the user as disclosed by Eggleston.

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8. Claims 1-8, 25, 26, 50, and 52-59 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamille (5,996,997) in view of Copple et al (6,178,408).

Claims 1 and 50: Copple discloses a system for an awards points account, comprising:

a. A main server for providing a user with an interface to submit a code obtained offline and associated with a number of points which may be redeemed by submitting the winning bid in an auction for an item (col 3, line 64 – col 4, lines 34).

While Copple discloses that the user submits the coupon from the product or product packaging in order to receive credit for a given number of points, it is not explicitly disclosed how the validity of the coupons (codes) is determined. However, Kamille discloses a similar system for submitting prize codes (coupons) from products or product packaging, and further discloses a code server for maintaining valid codes and verifying the validity of the code submitted by the user (col 3, lines 18-35 and col 12, lines 31-41). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to validate the coupons (codes) submitted by the user in Copple by verifying that the code is in a database of valid codes. One would have been to validate the code in order to ensure that each code (coupon) was only redeemed once by the user in Copple and to prevent fraudulent codes from being processed.

Claims 2-4: Copple and Kamille disclose a system for an awards points account as in Claim 1 above, and Copple further discloses maintaining a user account containing the points balance for the user and updates the user account after the user submits a valid code (col 3, line 64 – col 4, line 34).

Claims 5-8: Copple and Kamille disclose a system for an awards points account as in Claim 2 above, and Kamille further discloses that the code may contain any number of letters, numbers, and/or characters (col 13, lines 18-27). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to identify the coupon used in Copple using any number of letters, numbers, and/or characters. One would have been motivated to allow the use of a variable length code on the coupon in order to increase the flexibility of the system to encompass both small and large point systems, i.e. a large system with millions of users submitted multiple codes (e.g. 100) each would require identification codes much larger than a system with only 100 users who submit only 5 codes each.

Claims 25 and 58: Copple and Kamille disclose a system for an awards point account as in Claims 1 and 50 above, and Copple further discloses a means for generating the code and fixing the code onto an offline medium (such as a product or product packaging)(col 3, line 64 – col 4, line 34).

Claims 26 and 59: Copple and Kamille disclose a system for an awards point account as in Claims 25 and 58 above. While Copple further discloses that the code (coupon) is affixed to the product or product packaging, it is not explicitly disclosed that the product packaging is a bottle cap. However, the inside surface of a bottle cap, the

sides of plastic or paper food and beverage containers, the inside surface of candy wrappers, etc. are all well known parts of product packaging used to carry and/or conceal game pieces and codes. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to print the code on the inside of a bottle cap of Copple's product. One would have been motivated to print the code on the bottle cap in order to prevent an unauthorized person from removing the code without purchasing the product.

Claim 52: Copple and Kamille disclose a method for an awards point account as in Claim 50 above and Copple explicitly discloses that point systems are known in which the points can be redeemed for a gift or discount (col 1, lines 23-27).

Claims 53 and 54: Copple and Kamille disclose a method for an awards point account as in Claim 52 above, but do not explicitly disclose the type of auction. The Examiner notes that the claimed auction types are all well known types of auctions. Furthermore, the type of auction being conducted has no effect whatsoever on the claimed system of accumulating and redeeming incentive points. Thus, little patentable weight is given to the type of auction or how the auction is run. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to know that any method of determining an item to purchase for which the award points would be redeemed could be used, to include any type of auction, since the procedure has no connection to the incentive awards method.

Claims 55-57: Copple and Kamille disclose a method for an awards point account as in Claim 50 above, and Copple further discloses adding or subtracting points from the account based on the users interaction (point-actionable event) with the system; thus, maintaining a user account containing the points balance for the user and updates the user account after the user submits a valid code (col 3, line 64 – col 4, line 34).

9. Claims 24, 51, and 71 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamille (5,996,997) in view of Copple et al (6,178,408) and in further view of Eggleston et al (6,061,660).

Claims 24 and 51: Copple and Kamille disclose a system for an awards point account as in Claims 1 and 50 above, but do not explicitly disclose that the user account would be placed behind a firewall and further protected using encryption. However, Eggleston discloses a similar system for awarding promotion points to a user's account which further discloses placing the user account behind a firewall and using passwords to increase the security of the account data. While it is not explicitly disclosed that the account data will also be encrypted, encryption is a well known security measure used to protect data and, thus, would have been an obvious addition to the security measures disclosed by Eggleston. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to encrypt the use account data in Copple. One would have been motivated to use encryption in order to prevent

unauthorized disclosure of the information, especially if duplicate data was being stored on a smart card carried by the user as disclosed by Eggleston.

Claim 71: Copple discloses an Internet system for maintaining a database of user point accounts which can be used as bids in an auction for an item and which are temporarily removed from the user account when the bid is submitted and permanent removed from the user account if the bid is the winning bid in the auction (col 3, line 64 – col 4, line 34; col 6, lines 7-24 and 57-63). Copple also discloses that point systems were known which set fixed dates or time limits for redeeming the points for promotional items (col 1, line 45 – col 2, line 16). This implies that if the user does not redeem the points by the fixed date or within the set time limit, the points would become invalid (i.e. removed from the user account). The Examiner notes that this was very common during the early days of frequent flyer point systems in which the points earned by a user had to be used within 12 months. At the end of the time period the points were invalidated and subtracted from the user's account. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention to set a time limit or expiration period for the accrued points for the user in Copple. One would have been motivated to set an expiration period and to subtract the expired points from the user's account in order to allow the service provider (point awardee and redeemer) to better manage the system as discussed by Copple.

While Copple does not disclose that the user account is protected using encryption, Eggleston discloses a similar system for awarding promotion points to a user's account which further discloses placing the user account behind a firewall and

using passwords to increase the security of the account data. While it is not explicitly disclosed that the account data will also be encrypted, encryption is a well known security measure used to protect data and, thus, would have been an obvious addition to the security measures disclosed by Eggleston. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to encrypt the use account data in Copple. One would have been motivated to use encryption in order to prevent unauthorized disclosure of the information, especially if duplicate data was being stored on a smart card carried by the user as disclosed by Eggleston.

Response to Arguments

10. Applicant's arguments with respect to the claims have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Applicant's arguments in reference to the obviousness rejection of using encryption and bottle cap have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. As discussed in the new rejection above, Copple discloses placing the coupon (code) on the product or product packaging. This disclosure, when applied to a bottled product, implies that the code could be placed on the bottle itself (i.e. the product), or on the front or back of a product label (if any) applied to the bottle, to the inside or outside of a carton for carrying a plurality of bottles (e.g. cardboard box for a case of soda), or to the inside or outside of the bottle cap (i.e. the product packaging). All of these have been used to present advertisement, coupons, game incentives, etc. for many years within

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the marketing industry. As for the argument that using encryption for preventing unauthorized access to the points would not have been an obvious way to protect the data, the Examiner notes that encryption has been used to prevent unauthorized access to data at least since the early Egyptian eras. To anyone seeking to secure data against unauthorized access such as discussed in Eggleston, encryption would have been an obvious choice.

Conclusion

11. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

a. Higginson et al (6,532,448) discloses a system and method for conducting an online contest in which the contestants can redeem points won by bidding on items in an auction.

b. Postrel (US 2004/0039644) discloses a system and method for aggregating reward points into user accounts and redeeming the points as payment of auctioned items.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Exr. James W. Myhre whose telephone number is (703) 308-7843. The examiner can normally be reached on weekdays from 6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eric Stamber, can be reached on (703) 305-8469. The fax phone number

for Formal and Official faxes is (703) 872-9306. Draft or Informal faxes may be submitted directly to the examiner at (703) 746-5544.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Group Receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-1113.



WM
May 13, 2004



James W. Myhre
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3622